

Trip Report for
Valerie Hansen, Kansas City District
Emerging Leaders Conference 2001, Chicago, IL
August 3-10, 2001

Having spoken with past emerging leaders in our District about this program, I had some idea of what the conference would be like, but even that did not prepare me for the experiences I had at the ELC/SLC 2001! It was personally enlightening, rewarding, and energizing. I plan to share my newly learned wisdom with my fellow co-workers as much as possible. My Branch Chief has asked me to arrange a branch meeting to share my insight and ideas learned at the conference. I will also share my trip report with the Senior Leaders of the District. Exactly what did I come away with from my experience?

Seminar by Nap DeFault, Dynamics of Leadership: My understanding of the goals of this session were to help me understand myself and also give tools to better understand others. I learned a great deal about myself, my personality type, strengths and weaknesses through the various personality tests we took. Mr. DeFault's explanation of what these tests measure and what the results mean were invaluable in helping me understand them and how they can help me work with others better. I especially learned a great deal from the 360 degree feedback style test called the Adjective Inventory Analysis. Having the feedback of my co-workers and supervisors is invaluable. I also learned a great deal about why I do things the way I do from the Myers-Briggs and the 16 PF tests. Based on what I learned from these tests, I now have the tools to help me work on my weaknesses and build my strengths.

Joint Sessions with the SLC: The opportunity to meet the Senior Leaders and discuss ideas, thoughts, and concerns with them was very rewarding to me. I had not met most of these folks before, and the one overwhelming concept I came away with from the experience was that they are more in touch with the "working level" people of this organization more than I realized. Also, they want to hear our concerns/ideas and want to help us reach our goals. All that I met were enthusiastic about the direction the Corps is heading, that our future is bright and that as an organization we can work through any changes and come out stronger. I especially enjoyed meeting Col. Fastabend who will soon be taking over command of the Northwest Division, my division, what an opportunity for me to have "face time" with our Division Commander!

Some of the speakers we listened to in the joint session included: General Flowers, speaking on the road ahead and his goals for achieving the vision. He emphasized that people are our most valuable resource. That we need to create a culture of positive proactive people. Occasionally we must allow failure w/out punishment and reward innovative behavior. Leadership must walk the walk. We need to engage our critics, build relations, actively listen, and tell our story. Mr. Michael Grunwald from the Washington Post spoke about his experiences and impressions of the Corps based on the series of articles he published in the Post. His feedback to the Corps is be open and honest with the media. His impression of the Corps was that it is an organization rich in traditions and staffed with highly professional, hard working, well meaning individuals that want to make a difference in the lives of those they serve through our various missions. But when we make mistakes, we need to own up to them and learn from them.

ELC Team Project: Our team project was to present a message to the SLC concerning how we planned to implement the vision. We prepared 36 "just do it" plans, identified 7 areas that we need help from Senior Leaders, and presented videos that can be used to help tell the Corps story. We hope our message was clear to our Senior Leaders, but we also need to relay this same information to all of our co-workers back at the Districts.

Conclusion: This was a lifetime opportunity for me. I thank Sue Gehrt for nominating me to the past EL candidate pool, and to the HQ selection panel for selecting me out of the pool candidates to attend. I thank my District supervisors and Senior Leaders for providing me the resources to go, and my co-workers for taking care of the important things while I was gone. I will try to not let anyone down for giving me this opportunity. Would I change anything with the Conference? I would suggest that each ELC be assigned an SLC that would act as our ambassador during the meet/greet sessions, to help introduce us to the other SLC members and help us "socialize" more effectively with them. There is so much more I could report, I could probably write several pages on this experience, but thankfully General Flowers limited us to one page!